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## THE ROUTE OF THE EXODUS FROM EGYPT.

By PROFESSOR GEORGE L. ROBINSON, PH.D.,  
McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago.

TWO QUESTIONS, viz., (*a*) whether all Israel or only the Rachel tribes sojourned in the land of Egypt and made their exodus from it, and (*b*) whether the true land of Goshen is to be located in Egypt or is to be extended so as to include a north Arabian land called *Musr* in the northern part of the Sinai peninsula,<sup>1</sup> while in themselves of great critical interest, are not under discussion in this article, which has rather to do only with the route of the exodus. Indeed, through the comparatively recent (1885) discoveries of Naville, the famous Swiss Egyptologue, we are relieved of some of the vagaries which men have entertained concerning the location of the land of Goshen and Israel's itinerary. The view, for example, once strongly held by Schleiden<sup>2</sup> and Brugsch,<sup>3</sup> which made the Israelites encircle Lake Serbonis, following the narrow track of sand which lies between the Serbonian bog and the Mediterranean sea, has been completely refuted by Naville's discoveries, which have not only determined the position of Goshen, but the probable exit also which Israel made from it; the first steps of Israel's line of march being now practically settled.

About forty miles northeast of Cairo, Naville discovered in 1884, among the ruins of a place called by the Egyptians, in Arabic, Saft el-Henneh, monuments of great antiquity, which, upon being examined more carefully in 1885, he found fixed the site of the religious capital of an ancient nome. Among the monuments discovered was one bearing the name of Nectanebo, the last of the Pharaohs (367-350 B. C.), which revealed the fact that the name of the surrounding country was Kes = Kesem, or

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Josh. 10:41; 11:16; 15:51.

<sup>2</sup> *Die Landenge von Sues*, 1858.

<sup>3</sup> *L'exode et les monuments égyptiens*, 1875.

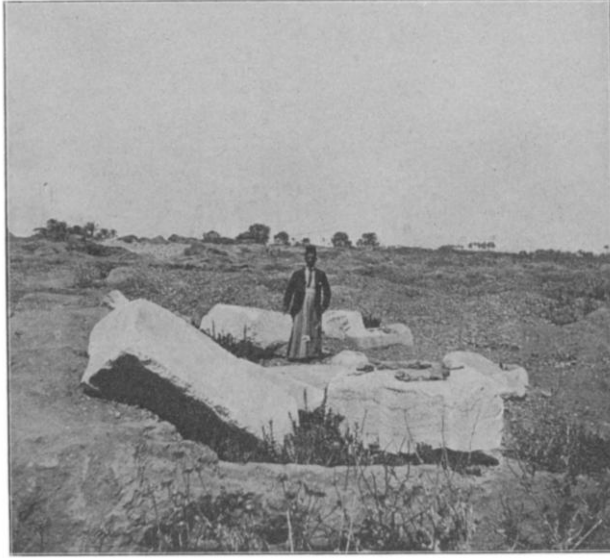
Goshen, and that its capital was Pa-Sopt, or Saft (el-Henneh). Now, in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, known as the Septuagint, the name Goshen in Gen. 45 : 10 is translated "Gesem of Arabia," from which it follows that Goshen was probably at that time pronounced Gesem, hence identical with Kesem, or Kes of the monuments. The modern village of Saft el-Henneh is



THE CAPITAL OF GOSHEN (SAFT EL-HENNEH).

situated some nine miles southeast of Zagazig (=Bubastis), and about the same distance northwest of Abu Ḥammad. The name of the railroad station at which one leaves the train to reach it is called Abu-Akhdar, a little less than two miles away. The land of Goshen accordingly is to be looked for somewhere within the triangle formed by the modern Zagazig, Belbeis, and Tell el-Kebir. In describing its location and character Naville says : "The traveler who leaves the station of Zagazig and journeys toward Tell el-Kebir crosses in all its width what was the old land of Goshen." This part of the country is still particularly fruitful, but at the time "when the Israelites settled in Egypt under the last Hyksos (or Shepherd) kings, the land of Goshen

was an uncultivated district not divided among Egyptian inhabitants regularly settled and governed; but probably a kind of waste land sufficiently well watered to produce good pasturage. Thus it was a district which might be assigned to foreigners without despoiling the inhabitants of the country."<sup>4</sup> The expression used by Pharaoh, "in the best of the land make thy father



GENERAL VIEW OF THE LAND OF GOSHEN.

and brethren to dwell," simply signified, therefore, that it was the portion of Egypt *best adapted* to Israel's needs.<sup>5</sup>

Here, then, in the eastern portion of the delta, not far removed from the antique Pibeseth and the less ancient Tell el-Yehudiyeh, or "Hill of the Jews," was the probable rendezvous or starting-point of the Israelites on the eve of their escape from the dominion and tyranny of Pharaoh.

Two routes lay before them: One in a northeasterly direction, passing near by Tanis-Zoan and Daphnæ, and along the

<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Fourth Memoir* of the Egypt Exploration Fund entitled "Goshen," p. 18, by NAVILLE, 1885.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Gen. 47 : 6.

Syrian coast through the land of the Philistines, which was the route usually followed by great conquerors; but, while this was the shortest route to Palestine, it would have required them to cross, first, well-cultivated and irrigated land occupied by a



THE HILL OF THE JEWS (TELL EL-YEHUDÏYEH).

settled agricultural people, presumably Egyptians, and, later, to pass by several fortresses on the Egypt frontier, particularly the stronghold of Zaru. This route is called in the Bible "the way of the land of the Philistines," and it is distinctly stated that the Israelites did not take this route.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, Tanis-Zoan, situated on Lake Menzaleh and distant about thirty miles from Goshen, was very probably at that time the royal capital, having

<sup>6</sup>Exod. 13 : 17.

formerly been the government seat of the Hyksos kings, beautified subsequently by Rameses II., Israel's oppressor, and now the residence of his son and successor, Menepthah, the Pharaoh of the exodus, before whom, the Psalmist tells us, wondrous things were done "in the field of Zoan."<sup>7</sup>



THE CANAL THROUGH GOSHEN (BAHR MUSA).

The other possible exit was to the south of this route, leading in an almost easterly direction through the fertile and marshy Wady Tumilât, lying on both sides of the Sweet Water Canal, to Ismailîyeh, which is situated some thirty miles to the east of the triangle of Goshen. This route is the one by which Jacob came down to the land of Egypt, where also he was met,

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Ps. 78 : 12.

as the Septuagint version informs us, at Heroonpolis by Joseph. By this same valley Moses had probably fled to Midian;<sup>8</sup> it was a route frequently taken by runaway slaves, according to a papyrus translated by Goodwin. This, too, it is said, was the regular Bedouin route before the building of the Suez canal. By this wady Israel could gain the easiest exit possible, avoiding, at the same time, not only the arm of the sea, but Pharaoh's body-guard also, should they be sent in hot pursuit after the fugitives. That the Israelites most probably made their escape by this route, both the known facts of archæology and our own comparative study of the geography of the vicinity unanimously agree.

The biblical data as to Israel's movements are as follows :

1. "And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses and pitched in Succoth" (Exod. 12 : 37 ; Numb. 33 : 3, 5).
2. "God led them not by the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near" (Exod. 12 : 17) ; "but God led the people about, by the way of the wilderness by the Red Sea" (Exod. 13 : 18).
3. "And they took their journey from Succoth and encamped in Etham, in the edge of the wilderness" (Exod. 13 : 20 ; Numb. 33 : 6).
4. "And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Speak unto the children of Israel that they turn back and encamp before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea before Baal-zephon : over against it shall ye encamp by the sea" (Exod. 14 : 2) ; "And they journeyed from Etham and turned back unto Pi-hahiroth which is before Baal-zephon ; and they pitched before Migdol" (Numb. 33 : 7).
5. "The Egyptians pursued after them . . . and overtook them encamping by the sea beside Pi-hahiroth before Baal-zephon" (Exod. 14 : 9).
6. "And they journeyed from before Hahiroth and passed through the midst of the sea into the wilderness" (Exod. 14 : 22, 29 ; Numb. 33 : 8*a*).
7. "And Moses led Israel onward from the Red Sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur ; and they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter" (Exod. 15 : 22, 23) ; "And they went three days' journey in the wilderness of Etham and pitched in Marah" (Numb. 33 : 8*b*).

*First stage: From Rameses to Succoth.*<sup>9</sup>—The narrator presupposes that these geographical names are familiar to the reader ; but, while this may have been the case to those of his

<sup>8</sup> Exod. 2 : 15.

<sup>9</sup> Exod. 12 : 37 ; Numb. 33 : 3, 5.

own day, it is not true any longer, and the greatest perplexity arises when we inquire, Where were Rameses and Succoth? an important question being, Are these the names of cities or of districts?

It is useless to discuss at any great length the site of the city of Rameses. Its location is quite unknown. The author in Gen. 47:11 can hardly refer to "the land of Rameses," for, as Naville thinks, this expression included a larger area than "the land of Goshen," probably embracing all that portion of the delta east of the Tanitic branch of the Nile. Professor W. M. Müller<sup>10</sup> is of the opinion that the city of Rameses seems to be intended by the narrative, and probably the capital of Goshen, where there was then a royal residence. He decides, therefore, in favor of the ruins of the modern Tell Abu Islēman, at the western entrance of the valley of Tumulât, as the most suitable starting-point; and there is little doubt but that this location is near where Rameses actually was.<sup>11</sup> Brugsch, it is true, identified it with Tanis, placing Pithom a little to its northeast; but Naville's discovery and identification of Pithom in the ruins of Tell el-Maskhuta, eleven miles west of Ismaliyeh, have quite refuted Brugsch's theory of both localities. Dr. J. Rendel Harris and Mr. A. T. Chapman<sup>12</sup> are of the view that Rameses will be found in the excavation of the mound Tell el-Kebir.

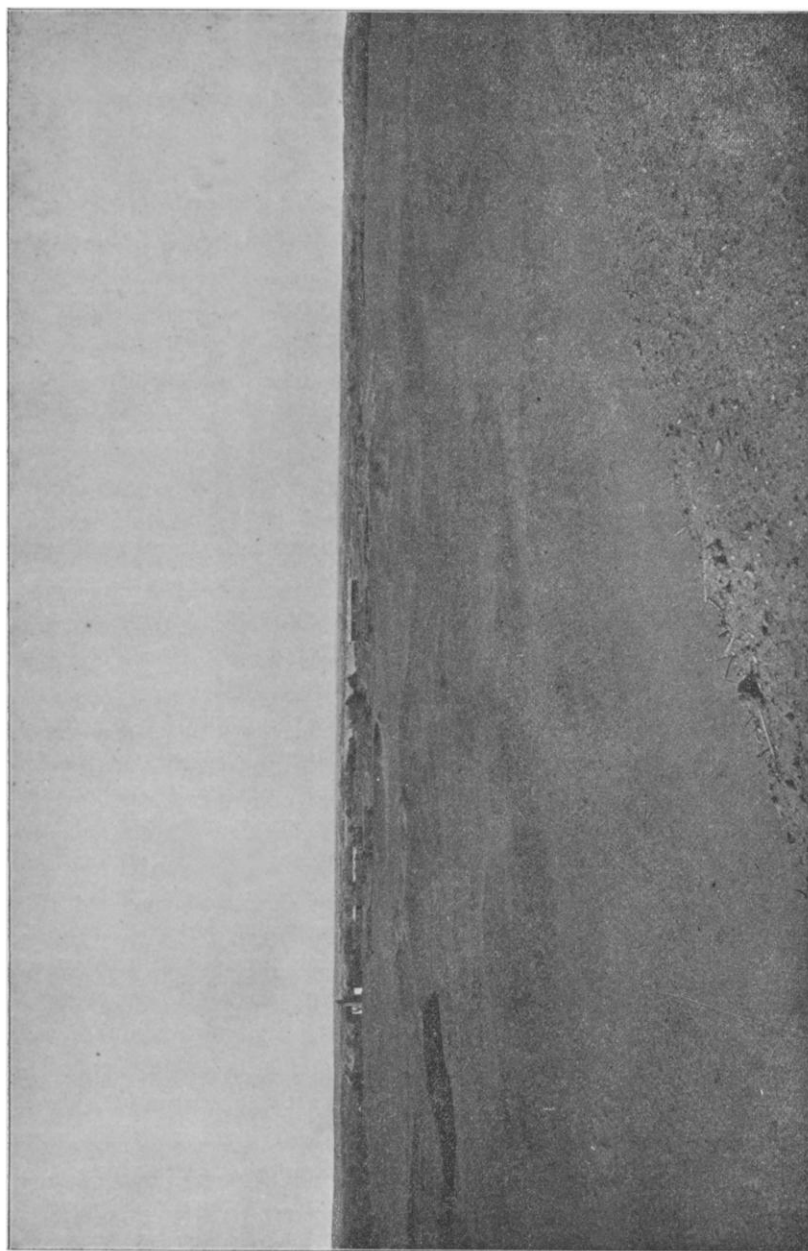
If, then, Rameses is to be located somewhere at the western entrance to Wady Tumulât, as is most probable, it becomes necessary to look for Succoth at a point not more than twelve or fifteen miles to the east of it in the same valley. Pithom, which is suggested by Naville, seems a little too distant, being over twenty-five miles away, an almost impossible stretch to be covered by nomads like the Israelites in a single day. It has been suggested that Israel's first encampment was somewhere in the vicinity of the modern Kassassin, *i. e.*, between Tell el-Kebir and Mahsameh, where there is abundance of water and forage.

<sup>10</sup> In his article "Exodus" in the *Encyclopedia Biblica* (col. 1436).

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Exod. 1:11.

<sup>12</sup> In their article, "Exodus and Journey to Canaan," in the *HASTINGS Bible Dictionary*.





MOUNDS FORMED OF THE RUINS OF PITHOM—POSSIBLY OF A CITY BUILT BY THE HEBREWS.

The Israelitish hosts would hardly halt at the fortified magazine city of Pithom, whose gates and storehouses would be closed to them. Furthermore, the name Succoth signifies a collection of "booths" rather than a town or a city, and therefore better describes some favorable camping spot *in a district*. The name seems to be identical with the Egyptian *Thukut* or *Thuku*, which is the name, not of a city, but of an extensive district. And it is easy to see how the Israelites would require a considerable area for a camping ground. Therefore, Succoth is probably to be located in the vicinity of Kassassin, in the Wady Tumulât, about midway between Tell el-Kebir and Maḥsameh, in one of the broadest and most fertile places in the valley. This, indeed, may have been the customary halting place for caravans on departing from the land of Goshen.

*Second stage: From Succoth to Etham, in the edge of the wilderness.*<sup>13</sup>—Experiencing no opposition from before, and without being pursued, the Israelites continued their march and encamped at Etham, which is with all certainty to be located at the eastern end of the Wady Tumulât, perhaps not far from the modern city of Ismaliyeh, at the head of Lake Timsaḥ, or Crocodile Lake. Near this point is to be found the highest ground of the isthmus, its elevation being fifty-two feet above the sea level. Here the desert presents, in consequence of its slight elevation above the bottom of the wady, a better-defined edge. From this point also a direct route to Palestine begins.

Now, Etham is probably the same as the Egyptian Ketem, meaning fortification or wall, whose Hebrew equivalent is Shur. In two passages<sup>14</sup> Etham and Shur are used synonymously; from which it is natural to conclude, in view of the fact that Shur is the obvious name of a desert, that Etham also must refer to a region or district rather than to a city or town. This is confirmed by a certain (Anastasi VI.) papyrus, dating from the time of the exodus and translated by Brugsch. It reads: "We have allowed the tribes of the Shasu *of the land of Atuma* to pass the stronghold of King Menephtah *of the land of Succoth*: in order to feed themselves and to feed their cattle in the great estate of

<sup>13</sup> Exod. 13:20; Numb. 33:6.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Exod. 15:22, 23; Numb. 33:8.

Pharaoh." The land of Atuma Naville identifies with Etham; and, this being so, it is obvious that it was a region inhabited by Shasu nomads, but, being insufficient to nourish their cattle, they were obliged to ask to share the good pastures which had been assigned to the Israelites. Besides, the hieroglyphic determinative of its name indicates that it was a border land; hence agreeing perfectly with what is said in Exod. 13:20 of Etham,



GRAIN PITS OF PITHOM (TELL EL-MASKHUTA).

that it was "in the edge of the wilderness." These reasons, together with the description in Numb. 33:6-8 of Etham as a wilderness in which the Israelites marched three days after crossing the sea, lead Naville to conclude that Etham is the name of a region and not of a city. And this is highly probable. Somewhere in this region the Israelites seem to have encamped, probably not far from the modern Ismaliyeh.

*Third stage: From Etham to Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, before Baal-Zephon.*<sup>15</sup>—At Etham a command came from Jehovah to "turn," *i. e.*, to change their course. What that course was, whether to press on in a northeasterly direction or

<sup>15</sup> Exod. 14:2, 9; Numb. 33:7.

to bend southward after passing around the end of the sea in the direction of Sinai, it is needless to speculate. This much is clear, however, that they were in danger, if they journeyed on, of meeting with armed resistance from the Egyptian soldiers stationed to guard the walls and towers which had been built across the isthmus as a defense to Egypt on its Asiatic side. And it must not be forgotten also that at this time the royal guard was probably stationed at Tanis, so that, if Israel pressed forward in an easterly or northeasterly direction, the chariot corps of Pharaoh could, at his command, easily overtake and attack them in their flank. It is even possible to imagine that Pharaoh had already dispatched messengers to the outposts, instructing them to resist with all possible power the egress of the Israelites. In the face of such impending antagonism, what could a mob of newly released slaves do, burdened with flocks and herds, wives and children, dough and cooking utensils, and carrying with them the bones of their royal ancestor Joseph? In view of these circumstances the command of Jehovah to turn about and encamp before Pi-hahiroth must have appealed to Israel as not an entirely unwise course of procedure. It probably gave fresh courage to the Israelites, while at the same time it may have suggested to Pharaoh the possibility that they had become "entangled in the land."<sup>16</sup> By doing so, however, the Israelites put the Red Sea between themselves and freedom.

But the technical geographical question still remains: Where are Pi-hahiroth, Baal-zephon, and Migdol to be located? The answer is not as definite as we could wish, for we are not informed about the distance between these places and their previous encampment at Etham.

Pi-hahiroth seems to be best identified with Pi-keheret near the western shore of the reedy Crocodile Lake—Timsah. Its name signifies "edge of the sedge," or "where sedge grows." Baal-zephon, from its etymology "the Lord of the North," was evidently a religious sanctuary dedicated to the Lord of the North, and was situated, it seems, opposite to Pi-hahiroth on the eastern shore of Lake Timsah. It has been identified with one

<sup>16</sup> Exod. 14 : 3.

of the summits of Jebel er-Rabah belonging to the Shasu or Asiatic nomads of Semitic blood who then occupied those parts. It was not a large place necessarily, but rather a shrine to which they may have made pilgrimages, as do the Arabs of Sinai today to different shrines throughout the peninsula.



MAKING MUD BRICK IN GOSHEN.

Migdol is a very common word in Egyptian, as in Hebrew, meaning "fort" or "tower." But the difficulty is to determine which of the several towers along the northeastern boundaries of Egypt is intended. It is reasonable to suppose that it was at least one of the most important of the towers in that vicinity, and was situated at a point where there was danger from invasion. Ebers places it at the present station of the Serapeum,

between the so-called Bitter Lakes and Lake Timsah, not far removed from the Darius stela on the west side of the shallow depression through which the Suez canal has in modern times been cut. There the Egyptians had found it necessary to build a fort to defend the narrow arm of the gulf which at that time connected Lake Timsah and the Bitter Lakes with the Red Sea. Hence the specific directions and landmarks given "before Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, before Baal-zephon," so that they could not miss the spot. Here they were overtaken by the enemy.

*Fourth stage: From Pi-hahiroth to Marah across the Yam-Suph.*<sup>17</sup> — If Israel encamped, as has just been supposed, along the southwest side of Lake Timsah, and then at the command of Jehovah marched through the sea opposite their encampment, this involves the supposition that the Yam-Suph, which is elsewhere identified with the Red Sea,<sup>18</sup> extended in those days as far as, or beyond, Lake Timsah. For this there is abundant evidence. In the first place, the name itself, Yam-Suph, or "sea of reeds," applies more readily to bodies of water like Timsah and the Bitter Lakes than to the Red Sea as known to us today, which is comparatively free of reeds. Secondly, the expression used by Isaiah, "the Egyptian sea," of which the Lord would utterly destroy "the tongue,"<sup>19</sup> implies more naturally a "tongue" or inlet of water such as that supposed to extend in ancient times from Suez to Lake Timsah and including the Bitter Lakes. Thirdly, it is difficult to think of Israel's having "turned" so far to the south as to have encamped opposite the modern Suez, or south of it, at the base of Jebel Ataka, where the sea is considerably deeper than at Timsah, into whose depths the Egyptians would hardly have so unwittingly entered in their pursuit. Fourthly, if the Israelites really crossed at or near Suez, how explain their journeying "three days," after crossing, into the wilderness of Shur without finding water before coming to the bitter wells of Marah?<sup>20</sup> Marah is usually, and as we believe rightly, identified with 'Aiyun Mûsa, which is situated not more

<sup>17</sup> Exod. 15 : 22, 23 ; Numb. 33 : 8.

<sup>19</sup> Isa. 11 : 15.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Deut. 2 : 1 ; and many other passages.

<sup>20</sup> Exod. 15 : 22.

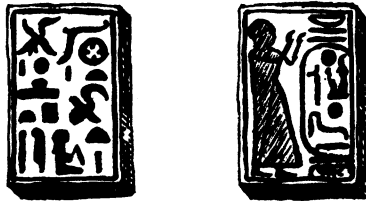
than two hours' distance from Shatt el-Bahr, just opposite Suez on the Asiatic side. Besides, it seems far more natural from the record to suppose that Israel did not "turn" and journey forty miles or more from the true exit of the land of their bondage.

In view of all these considerations, therefore, we conclude that the place of crossing the Red Sea was not far to the south of Lake Timsah, perhaps through the lake itself; but, in any case, at a point where the sea was narrow and could be crossed by a host like Israel's in one night.<sup>21</sup> "For the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided."<sup>22</sup> This hypothesis as to the former extension of the Suez arm of the Red Sea, which is confirmed by recent geological surveys, does not require us to believe that the waters of the Red Sea were much higher then than now, nor that the surface of the earth has changed in altitude to any great extent. For today the banks of the Suez canal nowhere exceed fifty-two feet above the surface of the water. The Persian Gulf also once extended farther inland than it does now.<sup>23</sup> From the Yam-Suph the Israelites journeyed on to Marah.

<sup>21</sup> Exod. 14 : 21-25.

<sup>22</sup> In a letter received from W. H. Beytts, Esq., head coast guardian of the Red Sea Littoral, dated July 7, 1900, we are informed that "the rise and fall of the tide at Suez is about five feet; more at springtides (the period of Israel's exit); and that the tide flows into the canal as far as the Bitter Lakes, which absorb it entirely. Beyond the Bitter Lakes there is practically no tide." This, however, would not materially affect the waters of Lake Timsah.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. DRIVER, in *Authority and Archaeology*, p. 20.



SEAL OF THE GRAND VIZIER OF RAMESES II.